



Willow Tree **Housing Partnership**

NEWSLETTER **WINTER 2022**

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CATHERINE DAVIES-GALLAGHER Finance Director
MARTIN CARNEY Interim Head of Operations
SUE SPARKS Head of Corporate Services

THE TEAM



AIDAN TRUELOVE-SPIERS Asset Project Surveyor
ALEX SMITH Housing Officer
AMANDA WEBB Housing Officer
ANGELA DERRY Shared Ownership & Rentplus Officer
CADHLA GERAGHTY Finance Manager
CLARE NORTON Business Support Administrator
CONOR MAHER Business Support Administrator
DAWN KIRBY Maintenance Officer

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EMMA BENNEY Housing Officer
HELEN TAMPLIN Development Assistant
JANE EAGLING Corporate Services Assistant
JANEY MATTHEWS Trainee Income & Expenditure Officer
JEMMA BAILEY Corporate Services Assistant
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KERRY WOOD Rent & Income Management Officer

LIZ FARMER Corporate Services Manager
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NEIL BUCKLAND Asset Manager
PAUL RAEURN Operations Manager
RIA GILLINGS Trainee Development Project Officer
ROXANNE SWEETING Senior Business Support Administrator

SANDRA HODGES Business Support Administrator
SARAH PURDY Trainee Housing Officer
SONJA LEWIS Financial Analyst
WILL LLOYD-JONES Finance Manager

RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT CONFERENCE

Willow Tree Housing Partnership wants to improve how residents' views are taken into account in the provision of services and Willow Tree Housing Partnership decision making. To help with this two residents, Dan Milner from Cullompton and Clarke Dobson from Plymouth, went to London to attend a conference about Resident Engagement on October 19th. They were accompanied by the Operations Managers Paul Raeburn and Mark Goodey.

The Conference set out how important Resident Engagement is and the approaches different housing providers and other industries adopt. Dan's view was "The main thing I brought away was the 4 areas where residents and landlords work closely together on Governance, Design, Delivery and Evaluation."

Clarke thought "I liked the suggestions discussed to help residents' and social housing teams to co-exist and communicate with each other. Social prescribing was the buzz word and the importance of retrofitting to deal with the climate crisis is crucial"

The good practice described will be brought back and considered the work currently taking place at setting up a Residents' Panel for Willow Tree.

Both Dan and Clarke believed "There were exciting times ahead for Willow Tree and we are happy to attend another conference as they are insightful and essential"

Mark Goodey said "Resident involvement is such an important part of what we do and so valuable as we strive to improve, the conference brought the challenges and opportunities into sharp focus and it was great to spend a bit of time with our tenants"



CONTENTS INSURANCE

From time to time things go wrong - a leak, flood or even fire can result in significant damage being caused to the home and its contents. This can be extremely distressing not least when personal and/or sentimental items are damaged.

Whilst Willow Tree Housing Partnership hold property buildings insurance we are not covered for the contents of your property; including items such as clothing, carpets, electrical goods and IT items such as laptops.

Costs incurred to replace these items can be significant, often running into thousands of pounds and therefore we recommend that our residents take out 'contents insurance'. Whilst we cannot recommend any one supplier, we would encourage you to search for 'social housing contents insurance' and perhaps consider using a comparison website.

If you have any questions about what our buildings insurance covers, please do not hesitate to get in contact with us.



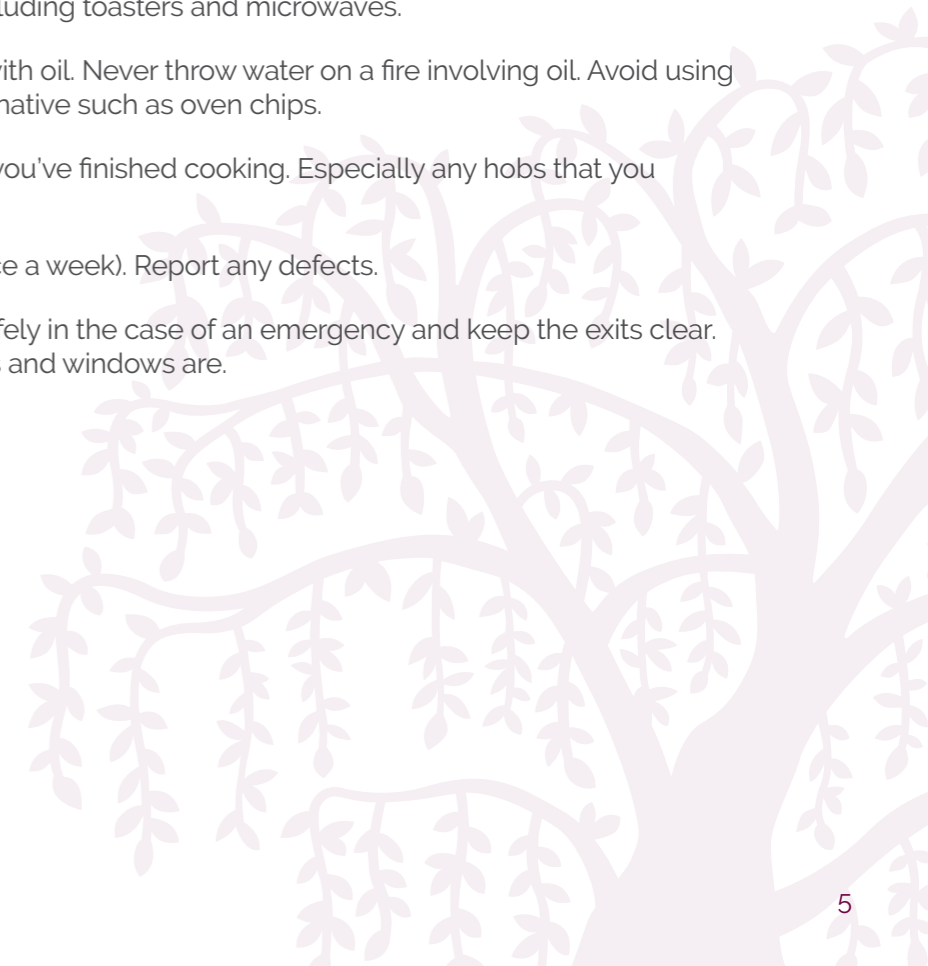
KEEP SAFE AT HOME THIS WINTER WITH OUR FIRE SAFETY TIPS!

As the nights draw in and we naturally spend more time indoors, it's important that the whole family are aware of fire safety.

Government statistics from March 2022 show that cooking appliances account for 45% of fires in the home and 11% of fire related deaths. Whereas smoking accounts for 7% of fires but 24% of deaths. Nearly half of fires occur between 4pm and 10pm.









Here are some top tips to keep you safe.

- If anyone in your home smokes, make sure cigarettes are put out properly. Don't smoke in bed or when liable to fall asleep in a chair.
- Take care if you use candles. Keep candles clear of curtains or other items that catch fire and make sure they are on a surface that doesn't burn and in proper holders that will keep them securely upright. Do not leave candles unattended.
- Do not leave Christmas lights switched on and unattended.
- Do not leave cooking unattended, including toasters and microwaves.
- Be especially vigilant when cooking with oil. Never throw water on a fire involving oil. Avoid using chip pans, instead opt for a safer alternative such as oven chips.
- Double check the cooker is off when you've finished cooking. Especially any hobs that you have used.
- Test your smoke alarms regularly (once a week). Report any defects.
- Know how to get out of your home safely in the case of an emergency and keep the exits clear. Ensure you know where keys to doors and windows are.



ENERGY SAVING TIPS TO TRY







With the rise in energy costs and the need to reduce waste, here's a few energy saving measures that may work for you.

-  **TURN IT DOWN** – Reduce your room thermostat by 1 or 2 degrees. Turn off or turn down radiators in unused rooms. Refer to your boiler manual or check the online tool on www.moneysavingboilerchallenge.com or contact us if you need advice
-  **NO PRESSURE** – To keep the correct pressure in your heating system bleed your radiators when required. Contact us if you need advice
-  **MIND THE GAP** - Move large furniture items away from radiators and always leave a 8 to 10 cm gap around radiators
-  **NOT COOL** - Use draught proofing to plug unwanted window and door draughts. Draw curtains back when it's sunny to gain some heat and keep them closed in the dark evenings to retain the heat
-  **KEEP IT CLEAN** - Use a 30°C wash on your washing machine and make sure you have a full load
-  **BUOYANCY AIDS** - Contact your water company as many are giving away water saving gadgets for free
-  **LAYER IT ON** - Layer on clothes to keep in the heat and use rugs and slippers to keep warm
-  **FOOD FOR THOUGHT** - Have at least one hot meal a day - homemade soup, stock cube drink or porridge are low cost options and will help keep you warm. When boiling a kettle, only fill it with the amount of water required or fill a thermos flask with boiling water to use as and when needed




If you need to contact us please call 01934 750780

TIPS FOR A DEBT FREE CHRISTMAS AND BEYOND

With rising costs and the energy crisis it's very easy to overspend, particularly at this time of year. Here are some tips to help you avoid getting into debt or how to manage debt.

-  **IMPORTANT BILLS FIRST** - Don't forget your everyday bills such as rent, council tax and utility bills, even though it's Christmas these still need to be paid
-  **BUDGETING** – Planning and budgeting are key to avoid getting into debt. Check how much you're spending; either write everything down and check against the funds you have available, or use a reputable free budgeting tool or app
-  **LOANS AND CREDIT CARDS** - Review existing loans and speak to the lender if you're struggling with payments. Avoid loan sharks who prey on people especially at Christmas. Ask for help by contacting a debt charity, such as Citizens Advice **0800 144 8848**, StepChange Debt Charity **0800 138 1111** or National Debtline **0808 808 4000**
-  **SPEAK TO YOUR UTILITY COMPANIES** – Many suppliers offer funds or grants even if you're not a customer, so contact them to see what support is available
-  **BENEFITS AND ALLOWANCES** – Check what you're entitled to, many go unclaimed every year. Use an online Benefits Calculator e.g. www.moneysavingexpert.com
-  **GROCERIES** - Cut your grocery bill by planning your meals ahead so you only buy what you need, buy own brand labels and check the reduced aisle for bargains. Beware of offers and Buy One Get One Free offers. Make use of beneficial reward schemes

If you are experiencing problems affording food, then speak to your local council or Citizens Advice to find out where your nearest food bank or community shop is. Local social media sites can be really helpful too

-  **BUYING ONLINE** – Leave items in your online basket and wait ... you may get a money off deal from the company. Look for discounts and offers. Check cashback websites like Topcashback, Quidco to get money back when shopping. Beware of Black Friday deals as they are often no cheaper.... So do your homework first
-  **SUBSCRIPTIONS** - Cancel unnecessary subscriptions or see if you can get a better deal
-  **MANAGE EXPECTATIONS** – Speak to family and friends and let them know that you're cutting back. Suggest a Secret Santa or perhaps have a shared Christmas dinner where everyone brings something such as the starter, dessert or crackers; it's good fun and saves money too!

NEW REPAIRS CONTRACT

After a thorough selection process, starting in January 2021, our new contracts started on September 26th 2022. Residents were central to this process, with their views gathered by a survey and incorporated into the tender. In addition residents sat on the interview panels.

MSB Property Services were appointed for the Responsive Repairs contract for Cornwall, Plymouth, West Devon, South Hams and Teignbridge while all of our other properties will have their responsive repairs carried out by MD Group. All Heating and Renewable servicing and repairs was awarded to Gregor Heating. The photographs show the contracts being signed by Paul Raeburn Operations Manager and Bill Clarke of MSB, Steve Gregor of Gregor Heating and Sam Matthews of MD Group.



Paul Raeburn from WTHP signing contracts with Bill Clarke from MSB



Paul Raeburn signing contracts with Samantha Matthews from MD Group



Paul Raeburn signing contracts with Steve Gregor from Gregor Heating



Heather Casey (Gregor), Scott Rylands (More Heat), Marcus Burrowes (Gregor), Dawn Kirby (WTHP) Roxanne Sweeting (WTHP) and Kylie Gregor (Gregor)

Front row - Paul Raeburn (WTHP) and Steve Gregor (Gregor)



HOW DO I CONTACT WILLOW TREE HOUSING OVER THE FESTIVE PERIOD?

IF YOU HAVE A MAINTENANCE EMERGENCY WHILE THE OFFICE IS CLOSED, PLEASE USE THE OUT OF HOURS TELEPHONE NUMBERS BELOW.

Please remember, if your call is deemed not to be an emergency you may be charged for any callout that you request.

If your property is less than a year old & you have an emergency or urgent repair, please refer to your Home User Guide for contact information for the developer.

Gas emergency heating or gas hot water repairs for all tenants please call Gregor Heating on telephone number - 01179 352 400

All other emergency repairs, including electric heating and electric hot water repairs or Health & Safety issues:-

For Cornwall, Plymouth, West Devon, South Hams, Torridge & Teignbridge tenants please call **MSB Property Services** on telephone number - **07415 770 771**

Tenants in all other areas please call **MD Property Group** on telephone number - **01278 574 355**

** Please be advised that calls to the office may be recorded for training and monitoring purposes*

COMMUNITY FUND PRESENTATION – BOB THE BUS

On 31st August 2022 Willow Tree Housing Partnership representatives, Paul Raeburn and Debbie Johnson joined residents of Stafford Court and the surrounding community for a cream tea. The CEO of Totnes and Rural Community Transport also attended the event and was presented with a cheque for £250 from WTHP. This was a donation from our Community Fund, to support the Bob the Bus project.



The Totnes community bus was piloted in 1997, after a visitor to the area complained that the main shopping street was not easily accessible due to its steep gradient. A Town Councillor liaised with a local coach company and in agreement with Town and District Councils, the project was funded for one year. Due to its success, it was decided that grant funding would be available to ensure its future; on the condition that the business community offered equal funding.

As a result of the pilot and its success, a more permanent service was setup in 2000 by a community group and was overseen by Group Co-ordinator Bob Vaughan. Mr Vaughan put in a lot of hard work and hours, alongside outside agencies in order to purchase a new bus. To honour Mr Vaughan, the bright yellow bus was named Bob and has since become an important feature of the Totnes community.

The Bob the Bus service is highly thought of locally and is a lifeline to many residents. Bob the Bus stops right outside our Stafford Court Scheme, a scheme of 20 homes for the over 55's. The bus also serves Higher Westonfields, Bridgewater Gardens and Mansbridge Road where WTHP have in total over 70 homes.

Bob the bus can be flagged down anywhere in Totnes and is available to non-residents of Totnes, that may be visiting the area. The success of Bob the Bus relies on the 38 volunteer drivers that support the service and the project is open to further volunteers joining their team.

When speaking with residents at Stafford Court and with other local residents, it's abundantly clear how important Bob the Bus is to the Totnes Community. One resident spoke about how during the pandemic the bus was on duty to take members of the community for their Covid vaccination, and was a reliable service, even through such uncertain times. Recently, residents have received news that the Express Gold Service will be re-routing and will no longer stop along Higher Westonfields; thus making Bob the Bus an even more important, valuable and highly regarded asset.

OTHER COMMUNITY FUND DONATIONS

At Willow Tree Housing Partnership we like to celebrate Rural Housing week, as we have and continue to build homes in smaller, rural communities for local residents. Rural Housing week this year was 4th – 8th of July.

As a way of supporting community groups in rural areas, we made a donation of £300 from our Community Fund to Edgemoor Nursey School and day care centre in Crapstone, Yelverton. This is a childcare nursery within the same village as our new development Abbey Meadows in Crapstone. We are building 2 x shared ownership properties and 6 x affordable rental properties and practical completion of these properties will be completed by March 2023.



Mark Goodey, Ria Gillings and Martin Carney from WTHP presenting a cheque to staff at Edgemoor day Nursey.

We also made a donation from the Community Fund of £300 to the Buckland Monochorum Parish Council to spend on some new ventures in their community. The cheque was presented to the Parish Clerk, Chair and Vice Chair of the Parish Council by members of the WTHP Housing Operations Team.



Martin Carney, Ria Gillings and Mark Goodey from WTHP on site at our Crapstone Development with Classic Builders.



Buckland Monochorum Parish Council receiving their donation of £300.



Willow Tree Housing Partnership

OPENING TIMES OVER THE CHRISTMAS PERIOD

Friday 23rd December	9am -4pm
Saturday 24th December	CLOSED
Sunday 25th December	CLOSED
Monday 26th December	CLOSED
Tuesday 27th December	CLOSED
Wednesday 28th December	CLOSED
Thursday 29th December	CLOSED
Friday 30th December	CLOSED
Saturday 31st December	CLOSED
Sunday 1st January	CLOSED
Monday 2nd January	CLOSED
Tuesday 3rd January 2023 - normal office hours resume	9am -5pm

Somerset Office

Eastbridge House
Pill Road
Rooksbridge
Somerset
BS26 2TN



**southwestern
housing
society**
Delivering More

Devon Office

Studio 5 – 11
Millbay Road
Plymouth
Devon
PL1 3LF



**TAMAR
HOUSING**

Telephone: 01934 750780

Telephone: 01752 250902

South Western Housing Society Registered with the Homes & Community Agency L2424. Registered as a co-operative and community benefit Society with Charitable Status 12664R.

Tamar Housing Society Registered with the Homes & Community Agency L2209. Registered as a co-operative and community benefit Society with Charitable Status 17390R

Why not join in on social media, give our pages a like? We are active on Facebook and Twitter with updates on the work we do and regular posts with hints and tips on resident safety #maintenancemonday, #wellbeingwednesday and #safetysaturday

Is there something you'd like to see, let us know!

www.willowtreehousing.org.uk



Willow Tree Housing Partnership



@willowThousing

DELIVER & GROW